



# Functional Roles Of 21st Century' Chief Executive Officers

**Ademola O. E.**

Professor & CMI Subject Matter Expert  
Principal Consultant  
Power-Age Management Consulting  
2 Edenbridge Close, Orpington, Kent BR5 3SL  
United Kingdom  
Email: ademolaeo@p-acc.co.uk

**Bayo Ogundipe,**

Director - ABUAD Integrated Resource.  
Afe Babalola University  
Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

## ABSTRACT

The paper explains the working definition of management, specifically, how it functionally deduces from the managerial performance. It concentrates on the roles of managers as found in the textbook elements, three different authors; Gavetti, Kanter and Mintzberg as well as collaborating conventional literatures. It underscores various terms that have been in use frequently; assessing how they affects corporate outcomes. The methodology is to analyze the three main articles on the role of CEOs and enumerate their functions- the attempt to evaluate few efficient methods to measure an effective enterprise performance.

**Keywords:** Performance, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Executive, Organizations, Leadership and Functions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at discussing and analysing the various roles of managers (mainly CEOs as interchangeably used with managers throughout this paper), mainly from the views of the textbook elements and the three primary authors. Over the ages, management thinkers have engaged deeply with research to identify and describe as well as prescribing the roles of managers in a frequently diverse business contexts. (British Academy of Management, 2013) Nonetheless, identify that there are no acceptable classification of functions as well as the frameworks available in assessing these. Although, different authors at different times have engaged with the subject but the expected outcomes, unfortunately, have not been met.

This paper attempts to derive a working definition of management. It entails the use of the text elements; its understanding and, to deduce some of the roles of managers as well as suggesting a clear set of roles as indicated by the three authors in consideration. There are many guidelines and codes, developed by regulators over two decades in an attempt to clearly resolve a perpetual problem identified with the board. However, these regulations and guidelines are rarely covered in work of this nature because they are not subject of consideration and obviously; time and scope will not permit us. The frequent use of the word, 'managers' is inherent; the words, chief executives, chief executive officers (CEOs); interchangeably being used throughout this work. The authors have considerably engaged with the three management thinkers. Gavetti, Kanter, and Mintzberg have been authors of interest to the writers over the years. However, this is due to the cognitive biases enjoyed over the years in reading their articles at different times, and any other published papers by the authors.



### **1.1 Working definition and roles of CEOs from Hitt M. A., Black J. S. and Porter L. W., 2012**

The authors suggested with different testimonies from interviewed CEOs of the time that, the CEO must be able to operate ethically and globally, be a champion in social responsibility and managerial ethics, international management and globalization. Even more, the CEO must fully engage with overall planning and organizing the company strategic management planning, organizational structure and design, and managing diverse human resources. Considerably, the CEO must be able to lead. Unquestionably, the CEO provides leadership in motivation as well as being a strategic leader in groups and teams. The best CEOs around have always maintained that they are project champions. They have sufficient skills or talented in creating competitive advantages through different innovative styles. They are well fluent in business and interpersonal communication and negotiation; as an individual and group decision maker. CEOs are, as a matter of must, be able to control operations management, control organizational change and development as well as, overall manage entrepreneurially.

Specially, CEOs are to manage in a manner that enables the measurement of their performances with the bedrocks of organizational content and the environmental context. In the light of this, discussing and practicing management is a challenging art or science of a business arguably, and particularly in a frequently changing environment, which aptly depends on individual worldviews of the subject. It also depicts the management as an exciting and yet requiring a lot of hard work and dedication. A CEO, remarkably, is a manager with an executive responsibility to oversee a business ethically and globally, planning and organising, leading, and controlling. (Hitt et al., 2012:9-14; BAM, 2013). Interestingly, an attempt to provide a working definition for the functional roles of a CEO could be adopted. Obviously, the holistic managerial functions provide a routine engagement. In particular, the managerial performance, which has been a topic of extensive interest in management that increasingly support the idea that management, could not be possibly a subject of singular working definition.

Contextually, there have been varying but unique discussions about this subject; amongst others are the evaluation structure of the roles of CEOs in Social responsibility and managerial ethics. Also, international management and globalization, strategic management, and the likes; have accorded, a multidisciplinary implication into understanding the functions of CEOs. (Hitt et al., 2010:19) hinted that this would provide an evidence based approach into the relative importance of CEOs' roles at varying organizational heights. Correspondingly, it will provide a combine and global views that CEOs are leaders of the executive team and shoulder with directing the daily activities regarding the business. By nature, this person provides an executive role in managing the organisation. He purportedly, present in every board business gathering as the chief executive. The CEO will, usually, preside over the management committee or executive committee; CEOs dualities are not subject of consideration in this work. Whilst a significant number of businesses schedule every four weeks business gathering, some usually, opt for weekly schedule.

Management is a demanding and essential element of a flourishing business, as well as showing and, stimulating procedures, though its administration entails a hardworking approach. Management is an activity or process devoted to the overall health and wealth of the business (Hitt et al., 2012:20). Procedurally, it brings to functional pattern every element of the organisation (human, financial, material, and informational). It makes use of a series of material in an objective-oriented (purpose and direction) approach to carrying out business activities (likes planning, deciding and evaluating) in an organisation. Due to the nature of management, it's obvious that one working definition wouldn't be definitive enough. Therefore, the needs for concretizing any definition with explanations of challenges being faced by managers (those entrusted with responsibilities of carrying out managerial tasks or roles).

## 2. MANAGERIAL ROLES

1. Managing tends to change due to frequently driven business dynamics in market environments. Technology and globalization (West leads the East vanishing, statement now, being replaced by East meeting the West according to Minter). Hitt. Et al suggests that the internet is a case in point with respect to both technology and globalization. To manage businesses in a rapidly changing global context, managers do their jobs effectively and efficiently for the promoters of greater participation in international markets. More policies to regulate the markets, for example, GATT, NAFTA
2. Due to swiftly changing business context and, to ensuring competitive advantages (dynamically, creating values for end-users; customers than their competitors), managers must deal with their business strategically.
3. Due to the impact of globalization and essentially the hasty changes in the global business context, managers must be entrepreneurial and innovative.
4. Effective assessor of people skills. Managing financial capital as well as human capital in an efficient way, critical to the successes of their organisations. The business is more than what its produce, just as Xerox know that the company is more than just its machines.

### 2.1 Rosabeth Moss Kanter

Kanter R M (2009) titled; "What would Peter Say" provides an evaluation of the continuing impact of the great management thinker Peter Drucker on today's managerial performance. In the perspective, Drucker saw himself as a hermit alternative to the widely acceptable conventional management educators particularly those working through and for the business school system in general. He thought of himself as a loner and someone who worked best to be termed an 'outsider' and, work most effectively as such. Drucker proclaimed that he would be a very poor manager.

However, Kanter claimed that Drucker saw a cause in the design of organisations; these root causes clustering in structural forms, procedural norms and frameworks. He furthered the argument that it was the responsibility of the chief executives to challenge the root causes lying in design while being focused without any iota of distractions on theirs' organisational definitive function. It is in the interest of today's business developments; include the public outrage over executive pay and the challenges to notably developed nation's economies that credited the predictions of Drucker.

Unarguably, Drucker's position has provided an edge to the subject of self-regulation to avoiding the grave consequences of overregulation by governments. Convincingly, using the words of Kanter, this could provide a saving, leading approach through modern tumultuous times. Retrospectively, Drucker would not, have been amazed at the modern day bonus ruckuses, having noted his various works in the mid-1980s, specifically, the outcry over executives' compensations. However, it should be acknowledged that Drucker was not against executives' affluence. Instead, he emphasised that the role of chief executives in their coordination of the actions of others whose motivation was indeed could be through compensation to get the expected corporate outcomes.

However, Drucker's self-possessing management strategy is one described by Kanter, not as a magic, but an exceptional capacity to spot trends and foresees looming troubles. In collaboration, Lafley A. G. (2009, May), concentrated on what Drucker proclaimed to be 'outsider', which notably prescribed to be meaningful outside. An outsider maybe, analysts piercing without fail to his courteousness, old-fashioned appeal, his humility and the fact that he never criticised harmfully, always courteously and usefully. Provision of this nature indicates the possibility for actualizing a working definition of stakeholders well defined as a peripheral region and the definition been well understood and followed in running a business.

Kanter saw limitations in the lucidity that makes Drucker's works reasonable. Particularly as regarding what makes a chief executive and what 'only' a chief executive can do, use the words of Lafley; considering the force of logic within and externally in an organisation. Correspondently, he usually, made sufficient arguments in winning though always been objective. In a perception, Drucker's view of chief executives roles reflects deeply on a functional role of a leader. It culminates that leadership, procedurally impacting on the functions exhibiting by an individual or a group in efforts towards objective accomplishment in a given circumstances. The CEO has an overall role of leading the business contextually. Comprehensively, it is a leadership in every context of person-centred, position-centred, and process-centred. Drucker's certainty according to Kanter (2009:68) is one for the CEO to "discover the right path once they'd identified their objectives."

Drucker worked on the assumption that the CEO competently discovers opportunities, as the right path. Expected: to deliver them objectively, to provide an objective solution, to the needs of stakeholders who are a cross section of the outsiders in his definition. Meaningfully to Drucker, CEOs must manage by objectives; defining clear objectives, for example, managerial performance as an aspect of leadership practice for efficient and effective leading in a turbulent moment.

According to Kanter, Drucker was not a revolutionary. However, his management proposition of knowledge workers, advocacy for CEOs to avoid self-defeating, presents an evidence base of his interest in encouraging CEOs to oversee the acts of learning from their past failures. Indicatively, Drucker would in today's language, make an express argument in support of sustainable leadership, those CEOs must innovate by social entrepreneurs stimulating via voluntary expertise action of not-for-profit businesses to teaming a room for expectation and affluence. Arguably, this could be viewed as a leadership role. Contextually, CEOs are shouldered with the responsibility of having a clear vision or goal for their organisations. Expectedly, able to steer stakeholders and employees, working together, in order to achieve that goal. They would also look at things objectively either internally (within the organisation) or outside (within the society as a whole).

Although, Drucker's earlier works would not have struck current researchers as in the fifties, sixties and seventies, with the same influence it ought to have but for his reputation. Drucker's thinking has become captivated and implemented within the contemporary encyclopaedia of actualizing the perpetual understanding that pivot the philosophy and practice of modern management, according to Lafley A. G. (2009b, May). Drucker in his works promoted in entirety that management as a profession should explicate the roles of CEOs. Notably, that managers both in the short and long terms, are to oversee the overall health of their organisations as well as being responsible wholly for the well-being of the organisation, not just wealth. In his application of knowledge workers, in spite of the culture, employees are to be motivated with the main purpose of improving performance by filling the gaps created by discontinuity. Although, Drucker's view of organisational culture, and how it influences the roles of executives remain relatively passive but one is mindful of the culture of leadership.

Edgar Schein (2004:17) was one of the key scholars exploring the importance of culture to leadership. He argued that leaders could play a large role in shaping the often informal and unwritten codes guiding language, behaviour and other aspects of daily life in organisations. In fact, he believed that this was a paramount function of CEOs as leaders; accruing the functional acts without a notable exception. Peters and Waterman's research on successful American organisations provide further support for Schein's mindset. They discovered that the highest performing organizations on the Dow Jones stock exchange had one thing in common. They all had 'strong cultures' in which the values of their organisation were widely shared and highly visible within the organisation. Appropriately, this is synonymous to Drucker's advocacy, noted by Lafley (2009b, May). CEOs are to set the values, the standards, and the ethics of their organisations, which they either lead or misled.

(Schein, 2004) And (Peters and Waterman 1982) argued that these values have a continuity ability. The spiralling cuts across the organisational customs, narratives, vision and mission statements, as well as implanted through measures and practices. Such as how leaders behave in times of crisis, for instance, Google, with the right leadership, exhibits a strong cultural trait as well as true leadership in this regard. It is famous for building offices that reflect its desire for a 'campus'-style workplace culture. Implicitly, Kanter saw the encouragement of Drucker regarding the roles of CEOs, as a continuous value. Apparently, it provides a working understanding for the meaningful 'outside' their businesses expected to follow. CEOs are to decide what business their organisation is into, and shaping values and standards expected in the delivery. Obviously, the modern followers of Drucker, however, would have discovered his pure strength of writing, his apparent mastery of the subject matter and the clarity of his expression. Notably, there were rare comprehensive books on management when Drucker authored

The Concept of the Corporation and the Practice of Management. There were very limited credible textbooks for managers at the time. Although, there were dedicated texts on industrial and manufacturing business but the complexity in comprehending their knowledge made things further difficult for the managers of those days. However, this in any way does not reduce Drucker's reputation, even more in this day. Drucker speaks on as well as his impact or influence on modern management styles. CMI (2004: November) noted that Drucker wrote more than hundred titles in the Wall Street Journal and much more articles in Harvard Business Review, even more than any other authors. In the print, Drucker had to his credit more than six million words. Importantly, the subject of managerial performance occupied his mind.

## **2.2 Henry Mintzberg**

The nature of management has proven to be of multidimensional in both style and delivery. According to Hitt et al. (2012: VI), all inclusive approach of managing ethically and globally, strategically, and entrepreneurially, amongst many debates. Unexpectedly, this has also permitted the extensive debate on what are the roles of managers and why the needs for CEOs. In this increasingly turbulent time in managing business, there is need for further exploration, to remind and function. Mintzberg H (2009, April) challenged many traditional ideas by insisting that managers are to answer the question, 'what managers do?' This approach maintains a parallel mind to the traditional means of attempting to understand managerial roles only by applying academic principles. Mintzberg in answering the question does not harass people with whom he opposes; he just softly, plainly and with overwhelming intelligibility, sets about proving them erroneous. In his writing, because of the thoroughness, artefact of a career dedicated resolutely to understanding of how people manage. The astutely, managerial performance, Drucker defied every attempt to be dogmatic about how managers should go about doing their works.

Understanding key theories within Mintzberg could be milestones away from the reality of his affluence on the outcome of his work particularly when we consider the seminal article titled, The Manager's Job: Folklore and Fact". Unlike so many management thinkers, Mintzberg's input to management idea does not concept on one or two smart theories within some parochial authority. His broadness in style including the SWOT of nearly the whole thing managers do and how they do it persistently give clear direction strategically. His wide-ranging demand enhance further, by a primary principle that management is about impacting human skills on systems, not applying systems to people, a belief that is consistently evident all through his writing.

Retrospectively, Mintzberg's main bang on the management scene surfaced in his work, titled- Nature of Managerial Work, published in 1973. The work is a seminal paper appeared in Harvard Business Review, The Manager's Job: Folklore and Fact, authored two years later. It provides in part the basis for this work. Fundamentally, these two works based on detailed research and thoughtful observation, recognized Mintzberg's status by showing that what managers did, when productively carrying out their tasks, was significantly diverse grossly from much business theory. The Manager's Job or in a more functional words, how managers work. Mintzberg in his work, "The Manager's Job: Folklore and Fact", staring out the reality of what managers do.



Thematically, there is a single standout subject of consideration throughout the article. Unspeakable, it pressurises managers to overwork themselves. They are prone to taking on too much work, support interruption, rapidly act in response to every prompt, seek the concrete and avoid the intangible, embrace incremental decision making procedure, and engage with nearly all things quickly. Mintzberg substantially clarified that managers desire to hearten the passage of current information within businesses, but more considerably, it appears being locked into their workloads. Consequently, an informational role of a manager is to welcome the opportunity cost of their time as well as continuously aware of their no stopping responsibilities.

Analytically, Mintzberg employs the article to emphasise many points centre on how important the manager's roles are. He indicated the need to give deeper thought into understanding the multidimensional approach within the managerial performance as a whole. Emphatically, he advocated for a better understanding of managerial roles and for businesses to engage thoughtfully before investing heavily into training and developing the present and future managers. Indicatively, no job is more imperative to human society than that of the managers. The managers in their roles determine whether the societal social institutions deploy their services responsibly well or whether they waste away talents and resources. Mintzberg stresses that there is no better time than now to eliminate the folklore about managerial work and time to study it realistically. It enables progression into devoting time to doing the difficult job of contributing significantly to improving managerial performance.

For evaluation purposes, managerial assignments provide no significant divergent from the ideas presented in Mintzberg's work. The work proposed six attributes, and ten basic functions of management. These characteristics and roles, he recommends, pertain to all executive tasks, from supervisor to chief executive. Therefore, referring to chief executives as managers provides appropriately the use of the word 'manager' and 'chief executive' interchangeably.

The six attributes of management work, according to Mintzberg includes:

- The manager's job is a blend of regular, programmed jobs and unprogrammed tasks.
- A manager specialises as well as generalises.
- Managers rely on information from every available input but give priority to that of which mode of transmission is oral.
- Managerial work entails brevity, variety and fragmentation
- Management work is both an art and a science but more of an art in case of combined fields.
- Management is fast evolving as a complex system.

Deductively, the six characteristics place an academic obligation into seeing Mintzberg, who had placed the ten roles liken to a belief system depicting the contending part of the manager's job.

These categories with further subdivision as underscored below:

Interpersonal roles:

1. Figurehead – executing representational obligations as an envoy of the organisation
2. Leader - instituting the winning feeling and motivating the subordinates
3. Liaiser - developing and maintaining webs of contacts outside the organisation.

Informational roles:

1. Monitor - collecting all types of information that are relevant and useful to the organisation.
2. Disseminator - sending out information from outside the organisation to those inside.
3. Spokesperson - transmitting information from inside the organisation to outsiders.

Decisional roles:

1. Entrepreneur - initiating change and adapting to the environment.
2. Disturbance Handler - dealing with unexpected events
3. Resource Allocator - deciding on the use of the organisation's resources
4. Negotiator - negotiating with individuals and dealing with other organisations.

Keeping the discourse in perspective, Mintzberg remains one of the rare truly generalist management thinkers of today. He has applied his ideas on management to the management education field in general, and most importantly, his ingenuity in clearly stating managerial roles as related to managerial performance. He strongly suggests that this area is in great need of restructuring. He was instrumental in setting up an International Masters in Practising Management in 1996, which seeks to change the traditional way in which managers are educated. Mintzberg's work covers extensively different areas of studies; in this case, it regards to CEO roles. There is such a wide perspective that different readers see him differently as an expert in different areas. For some people, he is an authority on time management and has written some of the most thoughtful and practical advice on the subject of time of management. For others, he is the champion of the hard-pressed manager surrounded by management theorists telling him or her how to do their job, and for yet another group, he is a leading authority on strategic planning.

For most people, however, Mintzberg is an academic who challenged the traditional viewpoints and, through the scholarly presentation of research findings, and some truly innovative thinking, changing managers' thinking regarding many key business roles and conducts.

### **2.3 Giovanni Gavetti**

Gavetti (2011, August) argues that while Michael Porter's perspective on competition and business strategy is powerful, strategic leaders need to analyse and manage thought processes as well as market forces – to be psychologists as well as economists. It is easy for strategists with the same mindset to pursue the same opportunities and to overlook opportunities that require new thinking and are 'cognitively distant'. It is suggested that associative thinking can help strategists to spot, act on, and legitimise such opportunities. The concept of associative thinking as a tool for strategic thinkers is introduced and explained.

Explicitly, Gavetti emphasises the needs for CEOs to be psychologists as well as economists, acknowledging that they are to manage strategically. His title, *The New Psychology of Strategic Leadership*, is advocating an approach into analytically tapping into the power of associative thinking as a skill to manage strategically. Although, Giovanni Gavetti and Jan W. Rivkin (2005: April) had earlier expressed that much of the time, executives use analogies to make strategic choices but the need for an associative thinking cannot be over-emphasised. This could be a suggestion acknowledging the best strategists analogically, appreciate both the influence and threat posed by of such assessments. The emphasis that CEOs as strategists, by assessment, is a key strength of a leader for organisation in moving and changeable context so much as it is important that enough strategies must be available to CEOs in their managerial roles, making strategic choices to add values by consistently providing strategic directions in achieving the goals of the business. Although analogies are powerful in performing uniquely in this role but combining it with associative thinking will help CEOs exceptionally in tapping into opportunities that seemed distant particularly in the midst of greatly involving competitions

Gavetti suggests that cognitive science input enormously on what it takes to be innovative and create measurable competitive advantage. Arguably, analytical approach into understanding a CEO's roles in corporate outcomes could be an addition to making the job of a CEO in understanding and coping with competition in the market. For example, the risk involves with innovation as, usually, been referred to allowing innovation to flourish. Even at that, it is important to recognise some innovations will involve risk and that some may fail. Sharing knowledge, providing incentives, supporting initiatives across the organisation and providing external support can all help encourage a more open, creative and innovative culture this in itself is an apt to the mind of associative thinking.

In the midst of intense competition, Gavetti suggests a paradigm shift from a superficial analogy into a radical strategic redirection, leapfrogging through cognitive intelligent to see and act on distant opportunities. CEOs must be leaders who have ideas as well as communicate the ideas in such a manner that others will follow, i.e., the outsiders turning to stakeholders or clients as the case maybe. (Gavetti, 2011:122). Deductive, the envisioned approach could provide a style in organisation creativity.

In collaborative terms, this is vital to successful innovation and often involves the development of cross-functional teams with a diversity of knowledge and creativity. Managers need to externally, scan the market, other business environments, thus the radical strategic redirection would administer the sense of accepting strategic choice for persuading the whole workforce that the business should act on distant opportunities; noting the example of George Fisher at Kodak; Gavetti emphasised. Associative thinking as a skill will not only help managers to spot distantly reached opportunities, acting on them, and legitimating them; according to Gavetti. It will completely improve the overall managerial performance by promoting innovation and ultimately making corporate outcomes robust.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Over the last two decades, notably from the suggested readings, and most importantly the chosen works of Gavetti, Kanter, and Mintzberg. Considerably, there have been broad ranges of interest on corporate outcomes. It emphasises the discussions of many salient issues like roles of CEOs on corporate outcomes, executive remuneration, skills expected from managers, board composition and leadership, measurement of managerial performance, and the likes. This essay underscores the need for further clarification as it seems there is no acceptable standard in determining the roles of managers though there have been different suggestions coupled with the statements of some of the notables CEOs around, as expressed both in the textbook requirement and the chosen authors in consideration.

### REFERENCES

1. BAM2013. *What Board Members Do?* Published paper of the British Academy of Management (BAM), 2013
2. Hansen M. T., Ibarra H., and Peyer U. *The Best-Performing CEOs in the World*, Harvard Business Review, 2013
3. Hitt M. A., Black J. S., and Porter L. W. *Management*, Prentice Hall, 2012, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition
4. Kanter R. M. *The Continuing Relevance of the Drucker Perspective: What would Peter say*, Harvard Business Review, 2009
5. Gavetti G. *The New Psychology of Strategic Leadership*, Harvard Business Review, 2011
6. Gavetti G. and Rivkin W. J. *How Strategists Really Think: Tapping the Power of Analogy*, Harvard Business Review, 2005
7. Mintzberg H., *Management: it's not what you think* (with Bruce Ahlstrand and Joseph Lampel). Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2010
8. *Managing Harlow*: Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2009
9. *Strategy safari: the complete guide through the wilds of strategic management*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (with Bruce Ahlstrand and Joseph Lampel) Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2009
10. *Strategy bites back: it is far more and less than you ever imagined*, Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2005.
11. *Managers not MBAs: a hard look at the soft practice of managing and management development*, London: Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2004
12. *The strategy process: concepts, contexts, cases*, 4th ed (and others) Harlow: Pearson Education, 2003.
13. *The manager's job: folklore and fact* Harvard Business Review, 68:2(1990) (Originally published in 1975, the article includes a retrospective commentary by the author.)
14. Website: [www.henrymintzberg.com](http://www.henrymintzberg.com).
15. Corporate governance | F1 Accountant in Business | ACCA. Retrieved from <http://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/student/acca-qual-student-journey/qual-resource/acca-qualification/f1/technical-articles/corpgovernance.html> 11 Oct. 2014.
16. "Peter Drucker: the father of post-war management. - Free ..." [www.thefreelibrary.com](http://www.thefreelibrary.com). Retrieved from <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Peter+Drucker%3a+the+father+of+post-war+management.-a099932522> 11 Oct. 2014.